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ABSTRACT

This paper describes the work of the New Zealand National Library and its commitment to being a center for diversity so that the collections within it are a reflection of the community it represents. Two acts that have focused attention on managing diversity in the government sector are summarized: the State Sector Act 1998, which requires the National Library to develop an equal employment opportunities plan each year; and the Treaty of Waitangi Act 1975, a compact by the Maori and the British Crown to build a nation together. The National Library consultation with the Maori has centered on a strategic partnership goal; it will have a strategy for developing an effective partnership with the Maori by 2002. (MES)

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A New Zealand perspective on managing cultural diversity

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Abstract

Describes the work of the New Zealand National Library and its commitment to being a context for diversity so that the collections within it are a reflection of the community it represents. The National Library consultation with Mäori has centred on a strategic partnership goal and acknowledges Mäori as the tangata whenua. It will have a strategy for developing an effective partnership with Mäori by 2002. The library is nothing if it is not part of the community it represents and the collections held within it are anything less than a reflection of New Zealanders.

Paper

Nga mihi nui ki a koutou /. greetings all

A library as a context for diversity.

The contention ***that a library and the collections held within it is a reflection of the community it represents*** is the underlying thesis of this presentation. Given the many and varied types of libraries and the greatly increased mobility of people within communities it is not surprising that libraries, like many social institutions, find it difficult if not impossible, to represent all the constituent members of their communities at any one time. The idea of a library as a context for diversity presents challenges to management, cataloguers, reference staff and most importantly to our clients. The library as a context for diversity has found a full

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spectrum of responses across several fronts throughout the world. For developments on managing diversity in New Zealand we draw on international experience and on Mäori perspectives. Mäori are the indigenous people of New Zealand.

From our near neighbours records of early white settlement in Australia, including materials from outback cattle stations have often been gifted to the Archives of Australia (http://www.archivenet.gov.au/jsredirect.exe). Recently the descendants of earlier Aboriginal Australians seeking clues as to their family identity have come in numbers to Australia's state and national archives. These people, including many from the stolen generation, come as new client groups. They bring new challenges to old institutions. Diversity means dealing with people we do not normally deal with and sometimes it includes witnessing their pain or their joy.

The USA is one of our major trading partners. From there in metropolitan Minneapolis, USA at the Hennepin County Library (http://www.hennepin.lib.mn.us/pub/feedback.html) staff have been systematically introducing a dynamic and responsive approach to cataloguing which is sensitive to a changing client base. Their process places demands on staff to address the cataloguing needs of clients. Their systems are dynamic and responsive to a diverse set of community needs. This library deals creatively with the diversity in its community.

We see our selves as similar in key respects to the Scandinavians and Mäori identify with Sami. In the Arctic Circle collaboration focussed on Sami documentary heritage material held in Norway, Denmark, Sweden, Finland and Russia is being collated as a Sami bibliographic record. This collaboration demonstrates the international recognition of the Sami as a community of information users who want the best of the world's knowledge, want to find a place for their unique contribution to that knowledge and want the world to know more of how Sami see themselves. You are able to contact this network of librarians and Sami under the constellation Berenice (http://www.nbo.uio.no/baser/samisk.html). Diversity both acknowledges and celebrates difference.

Closer to home in Wellington, New Zealand, the Wellington Public Library (http://www.wcl.govt.nz/) in a Business Process Re-engineering (BPR) management initiative has made clients the primary influence on new acquisitions. Clients are being given much greater access to a wider range of local body resources as well. BPR was very contentious for some staff at the beginning. It has progressively delighted an increasing number of ratepayer clients as the process has become more effective. The new services available from surviving branches of the library include the payment of rates and traffic fines, an information service about local building regulations and more electronic information stations. Their new focus on understanding the needs of existing clients, as well as acting to attract new ones, is a significant change in focus. The Wellington Public Library approach is characteristic of a new wave of libraries; libraries that never sleep. Electronically they are open for business 24 hours a day. In Mäori, Wellington Public Library, a window to the world (He Matapihi ki te Ao Nui) continues to investigate new means to respond to the diversity of the communities it serves as dynamic, responsive and flexible information hub.

The National Library of New Zealand Te Puna Matauranga o Aotearoa as a microcosm of the country.

The National Library of New Zealand Te Puna Matauranga o Aotearoa (http://intranet.natlib.govt.nz/Library/nlnzhome.htm) is a core government department employing 400 staff in over twelve locations. The National Library fulfils a comprehensive range of functions including managing the Crown's heritage collections, providing advice and guidance to the library community and providing policy advice to government (Atwool, 1998; NLNZ Fact Sheet, 1999). Specific legislation exists for the National Library and the heritage materials held within its Alexander Turnbull Library collections. A raft of other relevant legislation, including two notable Acts, is central to managing the diversity found in this

microcosm of the nation. The thesis, ***that a library, and the collections held within it are a reflection of the community it represents***, has special relevance to our National Library. The two Acts which focus our attention on managing diversity in the government sector are the EEO provisions of The State Sector Act 1998 and the Treaty of Waitangi Act 1975.

The Chief Executive/National Librarian under section 58 of the State Sector Act 1998 is required to develop an Equal Employment Opportunities (EEO) (SSC, 1997) plan each year and report on progress for the past year. The government's EEO context for the period to 2010 is to develop credibility to withstand criticism. The Public service must reflect in its composition a commitment to tolerance, cultural consciousness and fair-mindedness. EEO contributes by promoting the composition of a workforce better able to respond to a diverse and demanding public. The composition of that workforce may one day mirror the composition of the society it serves. EEO promotes fairness, eliminates all forms of unfair discrimination yet is firmly based on the merit principle. EEO groups defined by under-representation in the Public Service compared to the labour force, and covered by the Act are women, Mäori, Pacific Islands peoples, ethnic or minority groups and people with disabilities.

The starting point for EEO is the premise that ability and talent are evenly spread between men and women and across all groups, allowing for the particular requirements of people with disabilities. This proactive initiative is a challenge to the status quo. Our National Library has a high majority of women distributed across all levels of management so women are not an EEO target group for us. All target groups have networks, which meet within work time to conduct their business of supporting both their group and the Library.

There are six other domestic Acts that support EEO and ten international conventions or covenants that our courts may refer to when adjudicating on EEO matters. EEO in New Zealand initially grew out of a strong social justice and anti-discrimination agenda. Today our Library is in the process of developing a business rationale to add further support to EEO in the current climate of the New Public Management.

The Treaty of Waitangi

The second main Act in the New Zealand context which promotes diversity and is central to the thesis, ***that a library, and the collections held within it are a reflection of the community it represents***, is the Treaty of Waitangi Act 1975 which established the Waitangi Tribunal.

The Treaty of Waitangi was a solemn compact signed by Mäori and the British Crown to build a nation together (Ward, 1999). The Mäori chiefs sought the overarching authority of the Crown in return for recognition of the tino rangatiratanga of the chiefs, the tribes and the people, including protection of Mäori property rights. However the Crown, in its endeavours to make land available for white settlers, increasingly breached the Treaty and marginalised Mäori. The Treaty of Waitangi Act 1975 provided a means of legal redress to hear Mäori claims of injury in the area of dispossessed lands. The provision of due process leading to settlements on Mäori land claims back to 1840 has allowed New Zealand's Treaty partners to engage in an outcome focussed debate that has lanced a 100 year old festering sore in our country. Although limited at this time to land settlements reached through The Waitangi Tribunal the effect of the Treaty of Waitangi Act 1975 has been to influence all government and local body decision making processes. Mäori perspectives are now seen as an expected component of any public debate on planning and resource allocation. Sir Robin Cooke, The President of the Court of Appeal, has described the Treaty in 1996 as 'simply the most important document in New Zealand's history' (Durie, 1998; Boston et al, 1996).

Obviously the need to consult with Mäori does not sit well with everyone. Less obvious is the fact that Mäori thinking is not homogenous. It is characteristically as diverse as Mäori tribal identity, individual Mäori identity and Mäori patterns of intermarriage throughout New Zealand and the world. If there is one single element that binds Mäori people it is whakapapa.

Whakapapa is all about being related, being connected and belonging to each other as the children of Papatuanuku (Earth). This cosmic, spiritual interconnectivity is highly valued by Mäori and forms the basis of their faith in the partnership that underpins the Treaty. The commitment to this partnership is more binding as a worthwhile goal to pursue across the generations, than the problems arising from any single failed contractual agreement from our history. As a Library we do not have a history of failed contracts. We do have years of imbalance faithfully locked into our cataloguing systems. It is a bias rooted in the world of yesterday's paper-based library systems, which if not addressed will perpetuate neo-colonial constructs of the world. This is our doing, ours alone. It is only in the last two years that we have begun to seriously address the need to enhance our electronic records, and catalogues, to incorporate a Mäori view of Mäori materials in our collections (Wairarapa Project, 1998). Diversity inevitably brings its own demands for libraries to adapt and change.

In the National Library consultation with Mäori has centred on our strategic partnership goal;

The National Library acknowledges Mäori as the tangata whenua and will have a strategy for developing an effective partnership with Mäori, by 2002. (NLNZ, 1998)

This goal impacts on both the number of staff within the organisation with Mäori competencies relevant to all our strategic goals and to the Mäori materials in the National Library collections and how these are organised. We have also had to face up to the demographics of our nation's current population mix. Of the total population 14.5% identify as Mäori and this percentage is considerably higher for the school age cohort. What then are the significant planning documents we have produced in the National Library? An examination of our strategic goals in the early 1990s reveals a strategic silence with a predilection to educate ourselves before really getting into any effective partnerships. By March 1994 (NLNZ, 1994) the strategic record shows that Mäori did not feature in any strategic goals although one of the eight key result areas did state the need for 'partnerships with Mäori to assist with access to and preservation of documentary resources relating to Mäori.' During the late 1990s some eloquent descriptive prose appears in our Annual Reports to government on our services to Mäori. I wrote some of this myself I confess, but it was not until 1998 that the above strategic goal was formulated over several months in a collaborative planning exercise involving all staff, Komiti Matua, and all our external stakeholders. This plan has shifted the balance from us employing the occasional stars and champions of matters Mäori, to implementing plans based on policy more inclusive of Mäori to deliver better outcomes for Mäori and clients seeking Mäori information. Deliberate targeting of resourcing and setting of performance targets for managers are two tools to help deliver on these outcomes.

It has taken us over 150 years to address the harm we have done each other. The healing of pain from the past can no longer be hidden or ignored. As partners we live too closely and care too much for each other to perpetuate our forefathers' misdeeds. Our Library is nothing if it is not part of ***the community it represents and the collections held within it are anything less than a reflection of ourselves.*** I am proud to be a member of our team at the National Library of New Zealand Te Puna Mätauranga o Aotearoa.

Partnership is the key. Partnership is the first step each New Zealander has taken. Each of us in our own way has moved towards understanding, accepting and then ultimately celebrating the diversity within our country, within the Pacific, within Asia and within the world at large. Partnership is one first step libraries anywhere can take to meet the challenges and opportunities afforded by diversity. That has been the New Zealand experience.

Kia ora tatou / Good health to us all.

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